FAQs for Gray Wolf and Delisting

Why do you consider gray wolves recovered?
A – The Service's conservation objective under the ESA is to secure gray wolves as part of the wildlife community of the Lower 48 states, and we have accomplished that goal in the Northern Rocky Mountains and the Western Great Lakes. Minimum numbers for gray wolf recovery were agreed upon at the outset of the plan, and we have far exceeded these goals and met the obligations of the Endangered Species Act.

- In 2002 the Northern Rocky Mountain population exceeded the minimum recovery goals of 300 wolves for a third straight year, and they were successfully delisted in the Northern Rocky Mountains in 2011 and 2012.
- In 2001, the Western Great Lakes population exceeded the minimum recovery goals of a sustained Minnesota population and 100 wolves outside of Minnesota, and they were successfully delisted in 2012.
- Today, there are at least 6,100 gray wolves in the contiguous United States, with a current estimate of 1,674 in the Northern Rocky Mountains and 4,432 in the Western Great Lakes.

Q – If they're already delisted in the Northern Rocky Mountain and Western Great Lakes, why do you need to delist them elsewhere?
A – Our comprehensive review determined that the current listing for gray wolf incorrectly included large areas outside the historical range of the gray wolf and did not reasonably represent the range of the only remaining population of wolves within the contiguous U.S. and Mexico -- the Mexican wolf population in the Southwest.

The ESA does not require us to restore the gray wolf (or any other species) to all of its historical range or even to a majority of the currently suitable habitat. Instead, the ESA requires that we recover listed species such that they no longer meet the definitions of "threatened species" or "endangered species", i.e., are no longer in danger of extinction now or in the foreseeable future.

The Service's role in wolf management is limited to the authorities under the ESA, which directs us to ensure that the gray wolf is no longer in danger of extinction. We have done that in the western Great Lakes and the Northern Rockies, and now it is time for us to remove them as a listed species and focus our limited resources on the Mexican wolf population in the Southwest.

Q – Is this based on science?
A – As with all of our decisions, it is based on the best scientific information available.

Q – What is taxonomic error?

A – The agency's comprehensive review of the gray wolf incorporated new information about the gray wolf's current and historical distribution. The comprehensive review is based on the best scientific information available and determined that the current listing for gray wolf erroneously included large geographical areas, all or portions of 29 eastern states, outside the historical range of the gray wolf.

Q – What will happen if wolf population numbers decrease?
A – The Service will continue to monitor the delisted wolf populations in the Northern Rocky Mountains and Western Great Lakes DPS for the planned period of five years to ensure they continue to sustain their recovery. Although we do not expect it will ever be necessary, as with all recovered species, we may consider relisting, and even emergency relisting, if the available data demonstrates such an action is necessary.

Q – Will this mean their populations will be decimated by hunting?
A – No. State and tribal wildlife agencies have a long track record of successfully managing wildlife in their states, including deer, elk, wild turkeys and many other game and non-game species. States with recovered populations (MT, ID, WY, MN, MI,WI) will continue to manage wolves according to their Service approved gray wolf management plans. States in which gray wolves are currently recolonizing, Washington and Oregon, also have management plans that support wolf reestablishment in their states.

As with many species of wildlife, hunting is an accepted and successful wildlife management tool that helps to reduce conflicts with humans, maintain stable populations, generate public support and benefits all wildlife thanks to habitat improvements made possible by revenue collected from hunters.

We are confident in the ability of state and tribal wildlife agencies to successfully manage wolf populations. Although we do not expect it will ever be necessary, we could consider relisting, and even emergency relisting, if the available data demonstrates such an action is necessary.

Q – What is the history of the Gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) in the contiguous 48 states?
A **–** Today, there are robust gray wolf populations throughout eight states – Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Washington and Oregon. There are at least 6,100 gray wolves in the contiguous United States, with a current estimate of 1,674 in the Northern Rocky Mountains and 4,432 in the Western Great Lakes.

- Northern Rocky Mountains
    - Gray wolf populations were extirpated from the western United Stated by the 1930s. Public attitudes towards predators changed and wolves received legal protection with the passage of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1973. Subsequently, wolves from Canada occasionally dispersed south and successfully

began recolonizing northwest Montana in 1986. In 1995 and 1996, 66 wolves from southwestern Canada were reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho.
    - Recovery goals included an equitably distributed wolf population containing at least 300 wolves and 30 breeding pairs in three recovery areas within Montana, Idaho and Wyoming for at least three consecutive years were reached in 2002.
    - By 2012, the entire Northern Rocky Mountain Distinct Population Segment (NRM DPS) was delisted and wolves were managed under State authority in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, the eastern one-third of Washington and Oregon, and a small part of north central Utah. Based on minimum population counts, the 2012 NRM DPS wolf population contained at least 1,674 wolves in at least 321 packs with at least 103 breeding pairs.
- Western Great Lakes
    - Gray wolves were extirpated from the Western Great Lakes by the middle of the 20th century, with the exception of northern Minnesota and Isle Royale in Michigan. Public attitudes towards predators changed and wolves received legal protection with the passage of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1973.
    - In 2001, the Western Great Lakes population exceeded the minimum recovery goals of a sustained Minnesota population and 100 wolves outside of Minnesota, and they were successfully delisted in 2012.

Q – How many gray wolves are there today in each state?
A – There are at least 6,100 gray wolves in the contiguous United States, with a current estimate of 1,674 in the Northern Rocky Mountains and 4,432 in the Western Great Lakes.

- Montana – 625 wolves, 147 packs with 37 breeding pairs
- Idaho – 683 in 117 packs with 35 breeding pairs
- Wyoming – 277 wolves in 43 packs with 21 breeding pairs
- Washington – 43 wolves in 7 packs with 4 breeding pairs within the delisted area
- Oregon – 46 wolves in 7 packs with 6 breeding pairs within the delisted area
- Utah – No packs were documented
- Michigan: 696 (687 in Upper Peninsula - late winter 2010-2011; 9 on Isle Royale in March, 2012)
- Minnesota: 2,921 (2007-2008)
- Wisconsin: 815 (late winter 2011-2012)

FAQs for Mexican Wolf Reclassification and Revised 10(j)

Q – What action is the Service taking regarding Mexican wolves?
A **–** The Service is proposing to continue federal protection for the Mexican wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) in the Southwest, proposing to designate the Mexican wolf as an endangered subspecies under the ESA, while returning management of the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) to state wildlife agencies across most of the United States where it is currently protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA).
The Service is also proposing to revise the 1998 nonessential experimental population designation (NEP) of the Mexican wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) under section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act.

Q – Why is the Service taking these actions?
A **–** The Service is proposing to continue protection for the Mexican wolf because it has not yet achieved recovery. The recovery goals will be detailed in the Revised Recovery Plan that is still being developed.
The Service is reproposing the NEP designation of Mexican wolves so that it will be correctly associated with the listed entity (i.e. *Canis lupus baileyi*). In addition, the Service is proposing to revise the regulations governing the NEP in order to enhance recovery efforts for the Mexican wolf in the Southwest.

Q – What is being proposed for the 10(j) rule?
A – The Service is proposing to revise the 1998 non-essential experimental population 10(j) rule by removing the stipulation that captive-raised wolves may only be released into the Primary Recovery Zone of the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA) in Arizona. The BRWRA consists of the Apache and Gila National Forests located in east central Arizona and west central New Mexico respectively. Under this proposal, the Service would allow captive-raised wolves to be released throughout the BRWRA.
The Service is also proposing to revise the rule to allow Mexican wolves to disperse from the BRWRA into the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA). The MWEPA is the area in Arizona and New Mexico located between Interstate 40 and Interstate 10.
Some of the revisions discussed in this proposed rule, including the potential revisions, in the final determination under consideration are:

- Developing and implementing voluntary management actions on private and Tribal lands within the MWEPA to benefit wolf recovery;
- Moving the southern boundary of the MWEPA in Arizona and New Mexico from Interstate 10 to the United States-Mexico international border;
- Expanding the BRWRA to include the entire Sitgreaves National Forest and the Payson, Pleasant Valley, and Tonto Basin Ranger Districts of the Tonto National Forest in Arizona; and the Magdalena Ranger District of the Cibola National Forest in New Mexico

Q – Will the public be allowed to comment on the proposed reclassification and the proposed revised 10(j) rule?
A **–** Yes. A 90-day comment period will be in effect for each.
On the proposed reclassification: The Service will accept comments received on or before 90 days after the date of the Federal Register Publication. How to submit comments is outlined in the Federal Register notice.
On the proposed revision of the 10(j) rule: The Service will accept comments and information on its proposal for 90 days from the date of publication in the *Federal Register*. Comments must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on the closing date. For information on how to comment, and where to send your comments, see the Federal Register notice or visit our website at http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/ or http://www.fws.gov/southwest/.

Q – What is a Mexican wolf?
A – The Mexican wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) is the smallest extant gray wolf subspecies in North America. Adults weigh 50 to 90 pounds lbs. with a length of 5 to 6 ft. and height at shoulder of 25 to 32 inches. Mexican wolves are typically a patchy black, brown to cinnamon, and cream color, with primarily light underparts. Solid black or white coloration, as seen in other North American gray wolves, does not exist in Mexican wolves. The basic life history for the Mexican wolf is similar to that of other gray wolves.

Q – Where are Mexican wolves found?
A – Historically, Mexican wolves were distributed across portions of the southwestern United States and northern and central Mexico. In the United States, this range included eastern, central, and southern Arizona; southern New Mexico; and western Texas. Maps of Mexican wolf historical range are available in the scientific literature. The southernmost extent of the Mexican wolf's range in Mexico is consistently portrayed as ending near Oaxaca. Depiction of the northern extent of the Mexican wolf's pre-settlement range among the available descriptions varies depending on the authors' taxonomic treatment of several subspecies and their interpretation of where reproductive interaction between neighboring wolf populations occurred. Mexican wolves in Arizona and New Mexico inhabit evergreen pine-oak woodlands (i.e., Madrean woodlands), pinyon-juniper woodlands (i.e., Great Basin conifer forests), and mixed conifer montane forests (i.e., Rocky Mountain, or petran, forests) that are inhabited by elk, mule deer, and white-tailed deer. Mexican wolves in the BRWRA show a strong preference for elk compared to other ungulates. Other documented sources of prey include deer and occasionally small mammals and birds. Mexican wolves are also known to prey and scavenge on livestock.

Q – What is a 10j rule?
A – The 1982 amendments to the Act included the addition of section 10(j), which allows for the designation of reintroduced populations of listed species as "experimental populations." Under

section 10(j) of the Act and our regulations at 50 CFR 17.81, the Service may designate as an experimental population a population of endangered or threatened species that has been or will be released into suitable natural habitat outside the species' current natural range (but within its probable historical range, absent a finding by the Director of the Service in the extreme case that the primary habitat of the species has been unsuitably and irreversibly altered or destroyed). With the experimental population designation, the relevant population is treated as threatened for purposes of section 9 of the Act, regardless of the species' designation elsewhere in its range. Treating the experimental population as threatened allows us the discretion to devise management programs and special regulations for such a population. Section 4(d) of the Act allows us to adopt any regulations that are necessary and advisable to provide for the conservation of a threatened species. When designating an experimental population, the general regulations that extend most section 9 prohibitions to threatened species do not apply to that species, and the 10(j) rule contains the prohibitions and exemptions necessary and appropriate to conserve that species.

Q – What is the current population?

A – The Interagency Field Team estimates the 2012 population of Mexican wolves in the wild to be a minimum of 75 animals, as determined by their most recent annual survey conducted in January 2013, up from a count of 58 in 2011.